

VZCZCXRO2296  
RR RUEHLN RUEHYG  
DE RUEHVK #0007 0280601  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 280601Z JAN 08  
FM AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0874  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHVK/AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK 0945

UNCLAS VLADIVOSTOK 000007

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: FIRST VICE GOVERNOR OF PRIMORYE SHOT IN VLADIVOSTOK

¶1. (U) On January 28, Primorye's First Vice Governor Sergey Sopchuk was shot as he was leaving home for work. The apparent assassination attempt failed and Sopchuk is reportedly recuperating in a Vladivostok hospital in satisfactory condition with wounds to his shoulder and hands. Police have a description of a suspect but no arrests. Vice Governor Sopchuk's official portfolio includes international affairs, land, utilities, agriculture and fishing.

¶2. (SBU)According to one Consulate source, Sopchuk controls a Russian-Chinese border crossing point and he is believed to be involved in smuggling. While there are economic reasons for Sopchuk to have enemies, Consulate contacts suggest the assassination attempt could have more to do with political intrigue. Governor Darkin has long been rumored to be on the Kremlin's chopping block and Sopchuk is seen by some as a potential successor to the high powered post of Governor. Meanwhile, Governor Darkin has insisted that his Deputies sign their own official documents, to "keep his hands clean" should any of his Deputies be accused of wrongdoing. With federal money coming into the Russian Far East to fund a new development plan, the post of Governor is more powerful than ever.

¶3. (U) Governor Darkin is quoted on the RIA Prima Media press service as saying this attempt to intimidate the public and the administration has failed and he expressed confidence that the person responsible would be brought to justice swiftly.

¶4. (U) Sopchuk is 43, married, and has three children.

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